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ABSTRACT

This guide, which is intended as a primer for program coordinators responsible for managing and implementing mentor programs, explains what content should be included in mentoring programs and how that content should be organized to maintain volunteers' interest in mentoring. Discussed in section 1 are the following topics: job description for mentors; structured forms of mentoring (traditional, group, peer, team, and intergenerational mentoring and telementoring); impact of mentoring; limits of mentoring (time, social distance, isolation); major goals of mentoring; major objectives of mentoring youth; and reasons adolescents with problems need mentors. The agenda and components of a structured mentor training program are outlined in section 2. Section 3 presents an orientation training program for mentors that covers the following: basics of mentoring, role of mentors, mentoring processes, mentoring activities to consider, communication skills for building relationships, mentoring practices, role play exercises, and guidelines for handling special relationships. Sections 4-6 contain the following: rationale and description of an ongoing training program; introduction to the importance of specialized training; and considerations and final thoughts about mentor training. The guide contains 38 references and the website addresses of 44 organizations concerned with mentoring and mentor training. (MN)

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*Who was your mentor?*

# A Training Guide for Mentors

by Jay Smink

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# Preface

The concept of mentoring has always been with us, in all societies and cultures–think of Plato mentoring Socrates, tribal elders in Native American tribes guiding their youth, or the age-old system of apprenticeship. Today, the time-tested strategy of mentoring is again gaining prominence. In the past decade, it has had a rebirth in organizations that focus on youth development, and more recently, the America's Promise initiative led by retired General Colin Powell has been a major catalyst in expanding mentoring efforts throughout the nation.

The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) has promoted mentoring as an effective stay-in-school strategy since its beginning in 1986. The NDPC is just one of the many organizations in America and throughout the world promoting the successes of the mentoring strategy for youth in at-risk circumstances.

Years of experience in assisting many schools, communities, and businesses to initiate a mentor program have taught us much about what has proven to be most successful in program design, technical assistance, training, implementation, and evaluation. We have learned that most local programs require more assistance with the evaluation component and the development and completion of mentor training programs. We have also learned that failure to offer adequate initial training as well as a continuous training program is cause for many mentors to leave the program in frustration and for new programs to fail.

*A Training Guide for Mentors* was written to meet the growing need for high quality mentor programs. With interest at an all-time high in the establishment of new mentoring initiatives, it is of great importance to provide materials that can support successful mentoring efforts. This guide is the result of the NDPC's research and work in hundreds of schools and communities across America and Canada. The information included also reflects the intensive interactions the NDPC staff has had with dozens of national and local organizations that promote and conduct mentor programs. There is also a reflection of information shared from several international mentor and tutor programs.



Many of the training ideas and materials included in the guide were adapted from other disciplines or from the suggestions of other mentor trainers. Some of the training information and materials were found in duplicated formats in numerous local programs, thus becoming difficult to know the original source. In these cases, just a general reference was made to the local programs in the reference section. To single out all the specific local mentor programs that provided data and insights to the preparation of the guide would be an impossible task. However, those publications and resources found to be most helpful during the development of previous mentor training programs as well as this guidebook are duly noted in the references.

# Overview of
# A Training Guide for Mentors

*A Training Guide for Mentors* was developed for use by program coordinators responsible for managing and implementing mentor programs. It was prepared based on more than a decade of involvement in mentor programs along with the experiences gained in designing and conducting training workshops for volunteers interested in becoming mentors. The ideas and materials included in the guide serve as a primer for program coordinators who will need to pick and choose from each suggestion offered to build their own customized training program. Then, allowing for their own experiences to be added along with their unique presentation style, they will have a thorough package of content to offer to new mentors.

This guidebook provides coordinators with the content that should be included in a comprehensive training program for mentors. It shows coordinators how that content should be organized and presented to volunteers in order to capture their initial enthusiasm and maintain their interest and participation in the program. This guidebook has also been designed to be a reference book for mentors in training, one they can refer to for a deeper appreciation and understanding of their new relationship with a young person and their responsibilities to make it a successful experience for both mentor and youth.

*A Training Guide for Mentors* is organized in sections that provide a sequential flow of ideas about mentoring–beginning with an introduction that describes what is meant by mentoring for youth and ending with ideas about how the mentor can go beyond the pairing relationship and actually be an advocate for the mentor program throughout the community.

## Section 1

...introduces the volunteers to what mentoring is and offers a set of materials that provides a thorough background about goals and objectives for most mentor programs. A brief review of several problems and issues pertinent to adolescent life is also presented to remind the new mentor about the daily encounters found in the lives of today's youth.

## Section 2

...offers a basic description of a structured mentor training program design. This demonstrates the value of providing support to the mentor from the initiation of the mentoring experience through the termination of the relationship or the mentor's commitment to the program.

## Section 3

...constitutes the main content and the heart of the initial training program. It consists of major training materials in four categories including

1) roles and expectations of mentors,
2) mentoring processes and communications,
3) mentoring activities and responsibilities, and
4) reminders and program ideas for successful mentors.

Within these categories are many different suggestions and recommendations to guide the attitudes and behaviors of the mentors as they work to establish a trusting relationship with their mentees.

## Section 4

...includes the rationale and description of an ongoing training program, including several suggestions for unique topics.

## Section 5

...contains an introduction to the importance of specialized training and an explanation of those topics that are included in this training. There are also some suggestions for role-playing exercises.

## Section 6

...contains some considerations and final thoughts about mentor training programs and insights as to how the mentors can continue to promote the values of mentor programs.

## Remember...

*A Training Guide for Mentors* is intended to be used as a reference book for program coordinators by allowing them to make an appropriate selection of information and content for their training workshops. The guidebook also serves as a source book for mentors to study while in the actual training workshop and to keep for later review.

# Section 1 Introduction to Mentoring for Youth

## What Is Mentoring?

Mentoring has been a practiced art of developing and maintaining positive and helpful human relationships for hundreds of years, by nearly every culture, by varied individuals and groups, and in many different ways. It has survived the tests of time and has been of enormous value to individuals and societies. Today, as we embark on a new millennium, there is a revival of interest in mentoring by the business community, faith-based organizations, social agencies, service institutions, and school-based groups.

Each local organization offering mentor programs tends to define its own program based on its stated goals and objectives. Mentor programs supported by national organizations or state agencies have their own definitions and program guidelines.

One such example is the California Mentor Initiative which is one of the most aggressive and organized statewide programs designed to involve mentors from the business sector with youth. Their description of mentoring seems to fit most programs found in schools and communities across America and is offered here as a baseline for further discussions.

*Mentoring is a one-to-one caring, supportive relationship or partnership between a mentor and a [mentee] that is based on trust. This relationship focuses on the needs of the mentored individuals and encourages them to develop to their fullest potential based on their own vision for the future.*

*(California Mentor Resource Center, 1996, p. 3)*

The One to One/National Mentoring Partnership is one of the largest national organizations promoting mentor programs for youth. Using their definition of mentoring is also helpful in understanding the basic idea of what mentoring is. They define mentoring as

> *"a committed relationship between an adult and youth, or the youth's family, focused on developing the character and the capabilities of the young person."*
>
> *(One to One Partnership, Inc., 1996, p. 57)*

Simply said, however, a mentor is a wise and trusted friend with a commitment to provide guidance and support to the mentee. Regardless of the definition, mentoring works and it is most effective when it is supported with a structured mentor training program that is properly designed and seriously implemented.

*...a mentor is a wise and trusted friend with a commitment to provide guidance and support to the mentee.*

# A Job Description for Mentors

*Get a life–*
*Be a mentor*
*and help a life.*

The Minnesota Department of Human Services offers an excellent list of mentor responsibilities in their mentor training manual. Their volunteer agreement and list of expectations serves as an excellent model and further description of mentoring (Newman, 1990). Several of the job tasks have been modified and are presented below:

## As a volunteer for the Mentor Program, I agree to:

- accept my assignment(s) with an open mind and a willingness to learn
- accept supervision by a social worker and/or volunteer staff in order to do a better job
- attend in-service training sessions and group meetings, and advise the volunteer office if I am unable to attend
- keep matters confidential concerning the child and family with whom I work
- be responsible for my volunteer work and act with proper consideration for those with whom I work
- complete monthly reports on my volunteer experiences
- ask about things I do not understand
- advise the volunteer office of any changes in my situation (address, phone, employment, family)
- notify the volunteer office of any extended leave, resignation, or a desire to change assignments
- make a legitimate effort to be on time for appointments related to my volunteer work

## As a volunteer, I can expect to:

- receive prompt replies for any questions or concerns regarding my involvement
- use my volunteer experience as a reference for future job employment
- request a transfer of assignment or a review of my involvement whenever I feel it is necessary
- receive the monthly newsletter, wherein I will be notified of any changes and upcoming meetings, along with other agency news
- receive assistance from the volunteer staff in evaluating my role and specific functions

## In these dealings, I can expect to be treated respectfully

- receive ongoing recognition for the service I provide
- be reimbursed for expenses which I incur on my assignment if those expenses qualify

# Structured Forms of Mentoring

Mentoring occurs in many different settings and in many different formats. However, all mentor programs require a structured program of support. This structured program enables the mentor to offer the mentee a degree of positive support and a variety of helpful experiences designed to advance the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies of the mentee.

A structured mentor program is generally recognized by having:

- a formal relationship between the mentor and mentee
- an established pattern for contacts
- recommended parameters for the meetings or activities
- a commitment to a time frame which is usually 12 months or not less than a school year
- an ongoing structured training program
- monitored and supported by experienced professionals
- a consistent assessment and evaluation effort

Although many different formats are considered structured mentor programs, including the Hewlett-Packard groundbreaking telementoring innovation using the Internet (Field, 1999), there are several that are considered to be more practical and more successful. The most common mentoring models or formats, with several excellent program examples noted in parentheses, are characterized as follows:

## Traditional Mentoring

(School-Based or Big Brothers/ Big Sisters of America)

- One adult to one youth
- Regular contact, about once a week or twice a month
- Commitment is usually a year or a school year
- Supported, monitored, and supervised activities

## Group Mentoring or Co-Mentoring

(Campus Pals or AmeriCorps Chapters)

- One or several adults to a group of youth
- Regular contacts could be daily for sustained period
- Commitment to a fixed time period, usually a summer or school year
- Supported, monitored, and supervised

## Peer Mentoring

(Boys and Girls Clubs or Coca Cola Valued Youth Program)

- One youth to another youth (ages could vary) with adult leadership
- Special interest such as science projects or math assistance
- Regular contacts and commitments
- Supported, monitored, and supervised

## Team Mentoring

(Foster parents or faith based program)

- One or more adults with multilevel youth
- Regular contacts could be with intact family for specified period
- Special interests or legal/volunteer placements
- Supported, monitored, and supervised

## Intergenerational Mentoring

(Retired Senior Volunteer Program/ RSVP or Foster Grandparents)

- Interchangeable between youth and older adults as leaders
- Special focus programs for youth such as homework centers
- Regular contacts and commitments
- Supported, monitored, and supervised

## Telementoring

(Hewlett-Packard Telementor Program)

- One or several adults with one or more youth
- Special focus on math, science, or computer-related interests
- E-mail interaction when appropriate with no fixed time or meeting place
- Nontraditional supported evaluation procedures

# Impact of Mentoring

Regardless of the format, structure, or institutional host of the program, mentoring is a community development program. Mentoring changes the structure and institutional boundaries of the community. It serves as a powerful human force in a school, community, or state that can change the vision, health, or the economic base of the community.

Mentors make a generational change in individuals and families. Mentors have the power and influence to change the negative cycles of their mentees and their families. The impact of mentors in a well-structured mentor program is boundless and serves as a powerful low-cost, low-tech strategy to help rebuild the dreams of youth in at-risk situations.

Mentoring is clearly an effective strategy for keeping students in school. Programs across the nation have an abundance of solid evidence supporting this fact.

- **The Illinois State Board of Education** reports that 83% of at-risk students who have mentors graduate from high school (*Annual Report*, 1990).
- **Career Beginnings** (*Mentoring Works*, 1998) also reported that 87% of students with mentors in their sponsored programs graduated from high school.
- **The DeKalb (Georgia) School System** reported results from their mentor program showing that 64% of students with mentors improved grades, 61% improved attendance, and 75% improved conduct in school (*Journal of At-Risk Issues*, 1998).
- **The South Carolina Youth Mentor Program,** initiated by the Office of the Attorney General in 1992 to reduce the increase of juvenile crime, incarceration and recidivism rates, has had good results. They reported that over 90% of the youths who were assigned to this mentor program avoided further arrests as juveniles (Condon & Lorick, 1997).

## Big Brother/Big Sister programs

The most comprehensive national research evidence is from a thorough review of Big Brother/Big Sister programs (Tierney & Grossman, 1995). A summary of these findings include:

- 46% decrease in initiating drug use
- 27% decrease in initiating alcohol use
- 38% decrease in number of times hitting someone
- 37% decrease in skipped classes
- 52% decrease in skipped days of school
- 37% decrease in lying to parents
- 3% increase in grades
- 4% increase in scholastic competence
- 3% increase in family trust

## The Commonwealth Fund's survey

Another nationwide study reported similar positive results from mentor programs. The Commonwealth Fund's survey (McLearn, Colasanto, & Schoen, 1998) reported the following:

- 62% of students improved their self-esteem
- 52% of students skipped less school
- 48% of students improved their grades
- 49% of students got into less trouble in school
- 47% of students got into less trouble out of school
- 45% of students reduced their substance abuse
- 35% of students improved family relationships

- **The inner-city minority students in Chicago** involved in mentor programs sponsored by the Midtown Educational Foundation graduated from high school at the rate of 95% compared to their peers who dropped out of school at the rate of 49%. The mentees also went on to college at the rate of 65% compared to 14% of the students with similar backgrounds who did not go to college (*Mentoring Works*, 1998)



A major advance in mentor programs for at-risk youth was made recently by Congress with the passage of the JUMP AHEAD ACT of 1997 designed to demonstrate successful mentor programs that reduce violent crime by juveniles. One of the objectives of this legislation is to allow the Department of Justice to rigorously evaluate the initial 93 mentor programs in varied environments across the country. Attorney General Janet Reno reports that early results show that 32% of the mentees were less likely to engage in violent behavior (Lautenberg, 1998).

# Limits of Mentoring

For all the positive aspects of mentoring, there are some limitations that need to be identified and recognized so that program coordinators can be watchful in their program planning and mentor training programs.

## Time

14 Several reasons for program failures are noted by Goodlad (1995), but by far the overwhelming deterrent is the very basic issue of time. Individuals who volunteer to be mentors have other personal, family, and job-related commitments just like every other person. The end result is that not only time itself becomes less available, but the quality of the available time is less than what it should be for each mentor-mentee activity.

## Social Distance

Whether perceived or real, other issues that pose as obstacles to quality relationships are related to the social distance between the mentor and mentee, i.e., having differences in socioeconomic status, culture, generation, language, or ethnic background. If a social distance such as language exists between the mentor and mentee, the mentor may not have the interest or persistence to either remain diligent to the task or to continue to work hard to accomplish the objective. A more socially-alike and comfortable mentor-mentee relationship takes less effort, and it may get more frequent attention than the difficult relationship.

## Isolation

The feeling of isolation is another problem that tends to surface when interviewing mentors. Mentors tend to feel alone and without needed encouragement unless they are involved in a structured program designed with a strong orientation and ongoing training and support program. Although time always remains an issue with mentors, they do value the importance of training and support. The essence of this guidebook reflects this observation of mentors–they need training, and they will participate in the training efforts to the extent of time available.

When program coordinators are aware of these challenges, they can provide the support needed to encourage the persistence a mentor needs to overcome the problems that will all too likely surface throughout the mentoring relationship.

*A mentor here, a mentor there*
*A mentor always at their best*
*A mentee here, a mentee there*
*A mentee works to pass the test*

# What Are the Major Goals of Mentor Programs?

The goals and objectives of mentor programs will vary in each school, community, business, or organization that designs and implements a structured mentor program. However, most basic programs focus within a framework that targets a youth-related problem or delivers a specific service to the mentee. The most common target areas for program goals are:



## Academic Achievement

Programs are designed to improve the basic academic skills of the youth including the improvement of study skills and test-taking skills.

## Employment or Career Preparation

Programs are designed to introduce general ideas about the workforce including such topics as potential careers, educational and skill requirements, how to get and keep a job, and attitudes about work. Many school-to-work transition programs are included in this category.

## Social or Behavior Modification

Programs are designed to develop positive attitudes and change negative behavior patterns of youth. These programs usually have resulted from guidelines mandated by juvenile justice or other social service agencies.

## Family and Parenting Skills

Programs are designed to assist young parents with the problems associated with teenage pregnancies and starting new families.

## Cultural and Social Responsibilities

Programs are developed to serve specific culture groups or genders to gain self-respect, learn survival skills, learn social-living skills, and secure the ability to set and reach personal goals.

# What Are the Major Objectives for Mentoring Youth?

The primary objectives of most mentoring relationships are to convey basic societal values, to add new personal skills and experiences, or to offer new insights, attitudes, and behaviors to the mentee. These common principles will add new vision and wider experiences to each mentee in any program whether the targeted goal is to increase academic achievement or gain new employment skills.

A review of successful mentor programs found in the FOCUS database, managed by the National Dropout Prevention Center, identified several other objectives. Among the most common objectives included the development of the attributes of honesty, self-esteem, responsibility, reliability, and commitment. Other objectives identified in local programs were developing students' resilience; learning how to work as members of a team; and applying techniques for problem solving, decision making, and goal setting.

*Mentoring is a journey–*
*Not a destination.*

# Why Adolescents With Problems Need Mentors

Young people growing up today, and especially adolescent youth, have to cope with many more personal and social pressures than any previous generation of youth. These issues are prone to grow into a lifelong problem or even be an immediate life-threatening situation if not addressed early. Early intervention through a structured mentor program may be able to give young people the tools and support they need.

18 According to *The Commonwealth Fund 1998 Survey of Adults Mentoring Young People*, eight of ten young people in mentoring relationships have one or more problems that put their success in school, health, or development at risk. The survey reported the five most prevalent problems faced by young people as negative feelings about themselves, poor relationships with family members, poor grades, hanging out with the wrong crowd, and getting into trouble at school (McLearn et al., 1998).

According to many parents and school counselors, normal adolescent development may not exist because youth face so many new and different social, psychological, and physical demands. Understanding these youth-related problems and issues, however, is extremely important for any individual about to undertake the task of being a mentor. A brief discussion of several of these youth issues follows and is adapted from United Way (1991).



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## Peer Pressure

One of the greatest forces on adolescents is the power and influence of their peers. This outside influence about personal attitudes and outward behaviors can be either positive or negative and should be recognized by the mentor. Mentors cannot force their beliefs upon the mentee, but they should be able to assist the mentee in learning decision-making skills so that they are able to make their own choices about these external forces and influences.

## Substance Abuse

The curiosity to experiment with alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is a constant threat to each adolescent in today's world. Each mentee will need to make his or her own choice about participation. The mentor should set an excellent example by avoiding the use of alcohol and tobacco in the presence of the mentee. Mentors should encourage discussions about the issues of abuse and be very observant of mentee behaviors. If evidence exists that the mentee may have a problem with substance abuse, professional intervention should be requested.

## Sexuality and Teenage Parenting

Many young people may turn to sexual relationships for a variety of reasons. This is a sensitive issue, and great care must be given to any discussions related to sexuality occurring within the mentoring relationship. Usually professional assistance is helpful to the mentor involving this issue.

## Child Abuse and Family Violence

Physical or mental abuse, within the family or in any environment, will have both an immediate effect on the mentee and also create long-lasting, negative attitudes and behaviors. A mentor will need to seek professional help if observations indicate that this type of abuse may be occurring.

## School Safety and Violence

Many young people are exposed to bullies or other violent behaviors in the school setting which may result in attendance problems or lower academic achievement levels. An observant mentor should discuss this with the mentee and inform the school officials about the situation being careful not to involve the mentee in the process.

## Depression and Suicide

When young people are overwhelmed with issues and situations they cannot resolve, serious depression may develop. When mentors are sensitive and see any indications of extreme depression or suicide, it must be referred to the professionals involved in the program.

## Nutrition and Health Care

Many young people feel they are immortal and tend to ignore good health practices. In addition to modeling a healthy lifestyle, mentors can provide excellent discussions in this area and initiate visits to health-related institutions or engage in special activities related to good health.

## Faith and Religion

This issue is usually within the domain of the family, and mentors should be sensitive to family values and practices. However, this may be an area of great concern for the mentee or there may be a mutual interest by the pair which could foster positive discussions to benefit the mentee.

## Social and Time Management

Social activities and time management are critical issues for young people. For example, how to manage leisure time, schoolwork, extracurricular activities, family chores, and other social demands may be very difficult. Mentors should be able to assist greatly in this area with helpful discussions about time-management techniques and related decision-making skills.

## Career Exploration and Part-Time Work

Career exploration is usually a natural and easy issue to address with young people because most mentors are in the workforce. Therefore, discussions about employment opportunities, specific job skill requirements, or visitations to work sites are quite common in mentoring relationships. Discussions about these school-to-work issues may be a good starting point that leads naturally into many mentor-mentee activities.

# Section 2

## The Components of a Structured Mentor Training Program

The most critical component in the design and implementation of any structured mentor program is the preparation of a mentor training plan and the execution of the plan from the start of the program to the very completion of each mentor's tenure or to the end of the mentor program. After a very careful selection is made of each mentor, it is essential that the mentors be provided a comprehensive training program consisting of an overview of the mentor program, orientation training including skill-building and enhancement activities, reinforcement and ongoing opportunities for continuous growth, and new information on specialized topics.

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## Overview of the Mentor Program

This part of the training program consists of primary information about the overall goals of the institution and the basic objectives of the mentor program. It will typically outline all the program parameters such as mentee profiles, their unique problems or the issues being addressed, expectations of mentors and mentees, institutional requirements, program responsibilities, policies, monitoring procedures, resources available, and how to request staff assistance when needed.

A formal program orientation and training session typically lasts two hours and should offer a comprehensive list of topics. Attendance should be required for all mentors at the beginning of the program. A recent national survey of 772 mentor programs (Sipe & Roder, 1999) reported that 92% of program managers required mentors to attend an initial orientation session. Some program coordinators also offer introductory training sessions separately for mentees and their parents or guardians. A sample agenda including the information that should be included in this initial session are shown in Figure 1.

# Agenda for the First Session of Mentor Training

## 1 Introduction

A. Purpose of the orientation program for mentors
B. Volunteers' introductions to each other
C. Explanation of volunteers' strengths and interests in program

## 2 Goals and Objectives of the Mentor Program

A. Background and need for the program
B. Target youth group of the program
C. Institutional goals and program objectives

## 3 Problems and Issues Affecting Adolescents

A. Characteristics of youth targeted for the program
B. General adolescent attitudes and behaviors
C. Common adolescent problems and issues

## 4 Problems and Issues Affecting Mentors

A. Mentor application process and assurance checks
B. Ongoing support for the mentoring experience
C. Expected benefits to the mentor
D. Nature and length of commitment
E. Need to monitor mentoring process and measure program success

## 5 School or Institutional Procedures

A. Overview of institutional policies and program guidelines
B. Reliance on the program coordinator
C. Parental involvement and permission
D. Program resources
E. Liability issues
F. Termination causes and procedures

## 6 Introduction to the World of Mentoring

A. What is mentoring? How is it defined in this local program?
B. What is a mentor?
C. Why is mentoring needed today?
D. General guidelines for the mentor-mentee relationship

## 7 Assignments and Program Suggestions

A. Review profile of assigned mentee
B. Begin to plan for initial meeting

*Figure 1. Sample agenda for first session of mentor training.*

# Orientation Training

Mentoring involves building a trusting relationship with a mentee–usually with a specific objective in mind such as keeping the mentee in school or providing opportunities for career exploration. Regardless of the program objectives, mentors have a tremendous responsibility to fulfill an expectation of the mentee to assist them along a successful pathway. Mentors will need assistance in building or enhancing their own skills and knowledge to accomplish these tasks with ease and efficiency.

Before mentors meet their mentees, a formal training session should be offered to each mentor or to the group of new mentors in the program. Typically the content in formal training sessions includes such items as the role of the mentor, how to start a relationship, communications skills, acceptable behaviors, simulated activities, "dos and don'ts" of the program, and suggested mentoring activities.

One of the oldest and best-tested, school-based mentor programs is the New York City Mentoring Program. Started in 1983 as a traditional mentor program between adults and young people, the program now serves 46 high schools with 67 businesses and agencies providing mentors. The program is managed by Ann Ensinger who claims that mentor training and ongoing support is critical to the success of any program. In some instances, the program even takes their training efforts to the workplace of the mentors. Her feelings about training are supported by her statement, "One of the biggest issues I've seen with new groups starting mentoring programs is the real naivete about what it takes. You're taking two people who don't know each other, who may not come from the same culture or age group. You can't slap these people together like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and say, 'Good luck, we'll see you in June'" (One to One Partnership, 1994).

A typical training program could be as brief as two hours but most local mentor training programs extend into several sessions reaching a total of 12-16 hours. Sipe and Roder (1999) reported that 78% of programs require mentors to complete some training; however, the training varied from 15 minutes to 16 days with a median time of three hours.

## Reinforcement and Ongoing Training Opportunities

During the life of the mentor program, it is critical to offer regular training sessions on a monthly basis, primarily as an opportunity to add or enhance the mentors' skills. These sessions, usually one or two hours a month, serve as an opportunity to reinforce the program objectives and to keep the mentor engaged and on track. These sessions will also serve as a reminder to the mentors about their need to continue to expand their own knowledge base and experiences. Mentors will also come to build a closer allegiance to the program, even forming very strong bonds among themselves.

The content of these sessions will be driven somewhat by local program needs; it also could include special topics useful to a mentor in certain situations such as child abuse, teenage pregnancy, career exploration, or gang awareness.

## Specialized Topics

At any given time during a mentor program, the mentor-mentee relationship may need special attention and should be provided assistance by the program coordinator or by other qualified professionals. When a mentor needs assistance with a particular mentee or with a special situation, it may be necessary to not only help the mentor, but also, at a later time period, share these experiences with the full group of mentors. In some instances, a very unique situation between a mentor and mentee may offer an opportunity to provide a case-management study to be shared with the total group of mentors. Of course, any of these unique discussions would not provide the names of the pair.

All the training should be coordinated and delivered by the program supervisor, but some specialized topics may be offered by professionals outside the institution coordinating the mentor program. Also, the mentors will many times be excellent sources for providing the leadership for some of the topics.

# Section 3

## Mentor Orientation Training

The primary purposes of the orientation program are to confirm the commitment of the mentor, establish the basic parameters of the mentor program, and to begin to prepare the mentors for their relationship with the mentee. This orientation is essential to the program because it allows for the formal presentation of the program goals and objectives, institutional policies and procedures, mentor requirements and resources available, and general program operating procedures.

The orientation program is a wonderful opportunity to extend a broader vision to the mentors about the integration of the school or organization goals with the objectives of the mentor program. Although they will vary in school districts, organizations, businesses, or communities, they generally will address several of the following statements about program objectives similar to those found in the Kalamazoo Area Academic Achievement Program (KAAAP, n.d.) *Mentoring Handbook*.

- Provide the youth with a positive role model
- Enhance the youth's self-esteem
- Instill a sense of responsibility by allowing youth to make decisions
- Develop a sense of accepting the need to improve academic performance
- Participate in recreational activities and other social settings
- Reinforce the efforts of the school and teachers
- Create an understanding for improved social and school behaviors

A program booklet with all the supporting documents and requirements should be distributed and reviewed for the mentors. The actual content of an orientation session(s) will vary based on the local program design but a basic outline is described in Figure 2.

# Orientation Training for Mentors

## 1 Review the Basics of Mentoring

A. Define what mentoring is
B. Discuss formats of mentoring
C. Review goals and objectives of local mentor program
D. Mentees' reasons for joining the mentor program
E. Mentors' objectives to accomplish with mentees

## 2 Role of Mentors

A. Roles and responsibilities
B. Qualities of successful mentors
C. Obligations of mentors
D. What mentors are not

## 3 Mentoring Processes

A. Review and discuss the levels of mentoring
B. Identify actions and topics for initial meeting
C. Review possible starting routines

## 4 Mentoring Activities to Consider

A. Discuss group activities and how to act
B. Identify initial activities for the mentor-mentee pair
C. Determine mentor's personal information to share with mentee
D. Discuss merits of possible activities to be considered for the pair

## 5 Communication Skills for Building Relationships

A. Active listening
B. Communicating with feedback
C. Helpful tips for communicating with youth
D. Proper praising recipe

## 6 Mentoring Practices

A. Best practices of successful mentors
B. Least effective practices
C. Pitfalls and obstacles to consider
D. Hints about rewards and incentives

## 7 Role-Play Exercises

A. Review of video containing mentor-mentee activities
B. Complete role-play exercises
C. Discuss simulations and how they relate to local program

## 8 How to Handle Special Relationships

A. Specialized training available
B. Techniques for dissolving relationships

*Figure 9. Outline for orientation training session*

Volunteers will join mentor programs with a wide range of knowledge and skills about how to perform as a mentor and about the attitudes and behaviors of youth. Therefore, it is essential that a comprehensive approach be used to develop and offer a full range of informational topics about youth and mentoring skills for the mentors. It is also prudent to vary the instructional deliveries and have multiple and continuous training sessions.



The content considered to be most pertinent for mentors is grouped into the four categories of 1) roles and expectations of mentors, 2) mentoring processes and communications, 3) mentoring activities and reporting responsibilities, and 4) reminders and other program ideas for successful mentoring. These topics and materials may be regrouped into different training sessions by local program coordinators depending on program objectives, mentor needs, training time available, or other local conditions.

# Roles and Expectations of Mentors

Within each local program, the mentors are expected to be exemplary role models who exhibit positive attitudes. The general criteria and expectations for mentors are grouped below into several categories. They are not always discrete, and some concepts are similar or restated in multiple categories; however, they are worthy of being repeated and discussed with different perspectives.



Program coordinators are reminded to pick and choose the training materials most pertinent to the design of the local program. Program coordinators should add their own personal stories or explanations to the concepts identified in each of the categories.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a mentor are awesome. First and foremost, the mentor must be a positive role model, someone with whom the mentee can identify. The mentor must display a very positive image, one that can guide the mentee's behaviors and actions. Other roles include building a trusting relationship, being a good listener, serving as an advocate, and being a nonjudgmental friend. The mentor role is more than a "pal" and offers much more continuous support for the mentee. For example, the mentor will serve in many different roles:

- friend
- companion
- supporter
- teacher
- coach
- counselor
- advisor
- advocate
- motivator
- sponsor
- tutor
- career model



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

*Nice mentors finish second – behind their mentees*

## Qualities of Successful Mentors

Mentoring requires individuals with a high level of caring for others and a keen interest in having others succeed. Balanced with the key factor of knowing how to develop a positive relationship, the qualities sought in each mentor include:

- personal commitment
- consistency
- accessibility
- flexibility and openness
- sense of humor
- persistence
- respect for youth
- willingness to listen
- kindness and patience
- ability to accept different points of view



## Benefits for Mentors

Mentors will volunteer to serve for varied reasons, but it is especially critical that they participate for the right reason and fully recognize their own reasons. Many of the benefits that help in the recruitment phase of the program are worth reemphasizing during training sessions.

*The Commonwealth Fund Survey* of practicing mentors reported that most mentors gained personally from their experience. In fact, four of five mentors said they benefited by feeling they were a better person, had increased patience, gained friendships, felt they were effective, and learned new skills such as listening (McLearn et al., 1998). Other notable benefits reported by mentors in numerous other programs include such statements as:

- supported a cause
- made a difference
- felt better about self
- made new friends
- learned about other cultures
- repaid a debt
- accepted a challenge
- learned new skills and how to teach them

## Guidelines for Mentors

All mentor-mentee relationships will vary and change throughout the life of the experience. Several guidelines will be useful to help build the trust and responsible behavior in the relationship. The most productive suggestions are:

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- keep communications confidential
- make promises only to the mentee
- keep all the promises to the mentee
- insist the mentee keep his or her promise to you
- emphasize your responsibility is to the mentee, not to the family
- maintain regular communication by any means
- seek assistance if the relationship is not compatible or must end for any reason

## Obligations of Mentors

Volunteers agree to be mentors and may have the best intentions to be the greatest role models possible, however, many times their daily routine may interfere. Therefore, mentors need to be reminded of the most basic obligations which include:

- always be accessible
- follow through on commitments
- demonstrate trustworthiness
- promote the overall mentor program with others
- be reliable
- support the relationship
- seek added information about the mentee

## Dos and Don'ts of Mentoring

There are many excellent suggestions provided to mentors as they participate in national, state, or local training programs. Many of these are intended to guide the mentor-mentee relationship, but some are offered to guide the mentor's interactions with program coordinators or with other peer mentors. The *Mentoring Handbook*, prepared by the Kalamazoo Area Academic Achievement Program, identifies an excellent list of Mentoring Dos and Don'ts for all new and practicing mentors (Figure 3). The suggestions were developed to guide new mentors with basic ideas and parameters to guide their own actions and attitudes about mentoring. They serve as an excellent starting point for introducing the world of mentoring to community volunteers.

| Dos | Don'ts |
|---|---|
| Do appreciate any growth. | Don't think you are going to change the world overnight. |
| Do praise the child when deserved. | Don't judge the child or his family. |
| Do ask questions and obtain information. | Don't forget that a confidence is built on trust. |
| Do share with the student and do communicate. | Don't forget communication means listening, too. |
| Do remember to be punctual. | Don't be late and disappoint a child that is counting on you. |
| Do remember to be a good role model. | Don't exhibit poor language, (written or oral) or dress inappropriately. |
| Do follow the rules of the school and the program. | Don't allow students to talk you into things that you know are against the rules. |
| Do show attention and concern. Be a friend. | Don't try to be a parent. |
| Do show that you recognize the student's values and lifestyle. | Don't try to inflict your beliefs or values on a student, rather demonstrate your values. |
| Do strive for mutual respect. | Don't settle for rudeness or foul language. |
| Do come prepared. | Don't come without a plan. |
| Do be honest. | Don't think a child can't spot insincerity. |

Figure 3. Suggested guidelines for mentors. (Adapted from the *Mentoring Handbook*, Kalamazoo Area Academic Achievement Program, Kalamazoo, Michigan.)

## What Mentors Are Not

The mentor may be a confusing role not only for the mentor but also for the mentee or the parent. Individuals outside the mentor program may not understand the role of the mentor, and even new or inexperienced program coordinators may have misconceptions; therefore, it might be useful to identify what mentors are **not**.



Smith (1997) provides an excellent list of what a mentor is **not**:

- a parent
- a social worker
- a legal guardian
- a probation officer
- a playmate
- a professional counselor
- a financier
- a priest or minister
- a law enforcement officer

In addition, a mentor **should not**:

- break promises
- talk down to a mentee
- be inconsistent
- expect too much
- cause friction
- condone negative behavior
- force a mentee into anything
- become a crutch
- expect too little
- break confidentiality

**Level 1 (M)–** The mentor possesses information or expertise that the protégé doesn't. Recognition and introductions of different roles occur here. The mentor is the principal lead person at this level and initiates nearly all of the actions or discussions.

**Level 2 (Mp)–** The mentor shares discussion ideas with the protégé from a position of leadership. This is the time when mutual trust is built and the protégé begins to acquire information and skills to put into practice. However, the protégé still relies on the mentor for guidance.

**Level 3 (MP)–** The mentor and protégé gain more equal footing and respect. The protégé is assimilating behaviors or skills and using them as well as making more decisions without consulting the mentor.

**Level 4 (mP)–** The protégé becomes less dependent on the mentor and utilizes new information and skills, turning less to the mentor for assistance.

**Level 5 (P)–** The protégé has acquired desired expertise and can stand alone. The relationship between the pair may be redefined to permit a different stage of friendship. However, it can also be characterized by dissolution or separation of the relationship.

*Figure 4*
*The Mentor-Protégé Relationship Model*

# Mentoring Processes and Communications

How the actual relationship occurs between the mentor and the mentee will vary with each pair. Among the variables reflected will include the time frame, the intensity of the interaction, and the expected outcomes. The conceptual model provided by Canadians William and Marianne Gray are offered to explain these relationships. They provide a framework to guide discussions during mentor training activities and they offer guidelines for eventually building the mentor-mentee relationship.

Gray and Gray (1989) describe the mentoring relationship as a series of five sequential levels of involvement that builds the complete relationship between the mentor and the mentee (called protégé in Canada). The structure is distinct and very predictable even when occurring naturally. These levels or stages may be repeated many times during the overall life of the relationship as the pair addresses new issues or begins a different set of activities or assignments. The Mentor-Protégé Relationship Model, shown in Figure 4, illustrates the levels and direction of the process.

# Communication Skills

*His thoughts were slow;*
*His words were few,*
*and never formed to glisten.*
*But for all of us and best of all –*
*You should have heard him*
*listen.*

The ability to have effective communications between the mentor and the mentee is the heart of the mentoring relationship. Without good communications, the relationship will struggle and probably fail. With excellent communication skills fostered by the mentor, the relationship will have a better chance of success. From the mentoring perspective, the two most important skills are communicating by active listening and communicating with feedback.

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Communicating by active listening is a key skill needed by the mentor. It is not just keeping quiet while the mentee speaks; it requires much more than that. To understand and appreciate what the mentee is saying, the mentor may need to ask questions, give feedback, and/or observe and interpret body language. The most attentive active listener requires the suspension of their own thoughts and feelings. The active listener must exercise an extreme focus on the speaker's point of view.

Communicating by active listening requires these skills:

- be silent
- concentrate on the speaker's voice and body language
- eliminate personal, physical, and psychological barriers
- acknowledge listening with responses or body motion
- seek more information when necessary
- exercise emotional control
- refrain from making extreme statements
- maintain soft eye contact
- listen without giving approval or offering solutions
- ensure that you understand what is said or felt
- respond in your own natural way
- encourage dialogue if you need more information
- look for other clues such as tone of voice, facial expression, or gestures
- jointly agree on main points of message
- listen for ideas and feelings, not just the facts

Communicating with feedback to the speaker is vital to the relationship. It helps to set the proper atmosphere for continued growth. Communicating with feedback is very important and is best observed when feedback provides:

- for mutual understanding
- praise for specific occurrences or observable behaviors
- for correcting by gently instructing
- encouragement for mentee's attempts to solve problems
- the mentor with an expectation to receive feedback from the mentee



A more in-depth examination of the praising aspect or feedback of the communication process is provided by Wilbur. Whether the praising message is negative or positive, Wilbur (1989) offers a proper praising recipe for working with mentees. The recipe includes these ideas:

- **Be immediate–**Catch them doing something right, right now!
- **Be sincere–**If you cannot be sincere, say nothing!
- **Be specific–**Concentrate specifically on what was done, not on generalities.
- **Show the benefit–**Ask yourself "how does this effort help the student?"
- **State your own reaction–**People want to know how you really feel.
- **Ask if you can help–**Offer your assistance. Don't order it!
- **Praise in public–**Correct in private.
- **Put power into your praise–**Positive, proper praising will motivate high performance.
- **Teach the way you want to be taught–**Each of us wants positive, sincere praise from our own teacher or leader. Provide proper praise for your own people.

Helpful tips for communicating with young people may not seem critical, especially if the mentor is a parent. However, experienced parents and

volunteers must not fall into communication traps and must understand and respect the values of communicating well.

Young people are different than adults and have a different style and language for communicating. Mentors should not feel obligated to change their adult language or style of communication to fit the youth's language, but understanding the differences is necessary and critical to effective communications. When interacting with young people, several helpful tips should contribute to improved communications. They include these reminders:



- young people are typically shy with adults
- find your common ground early on
- initiate discussion if necessary
- don't make quick judgments on language or discussion topics
- use your own adult language
- do not use slang or street language
- avoid put-downs or name-calling
- avoid comparisons to self or others
- avoid advising on issues
- avoid interruptions
- encourage reflection and self-evaluation

# Mentoring Activities and Reporting Responsibilities

## Mentoring Activities

The relationships that are built between the mentor and the mentee are primarily established during planned mentoring activities. These activities can be both group activities with other pairs in the program or just the single pair of a mentor and a mentee. However, every planned activity should support the program goals and encourage the continued development of the mentee.



Program staff will typically plan group activities. They are commonly scheduled at the start and end of the mentor program or the mentors' commitment period. Special mid-year group activities are also possible depending on the goals of the local program. Group activities are normally structured and usually have a broader perspective. Several examples are:

- picnics
- college field trips
- special sporting events
- conducting a community service project
- parents' night
- local business tours
- attending an amusement park
- conducting awards and recognition events

Mentoring activities for single pairs will vary depending on the program goals and the interests of the mentee and the mentor. The activities will also be influenced by the age of the mentee and the restrictions of the program, such as permission to leave the school campus or institutional property. The program goals will guide the range of activities; therefore, examples of activities are only presented here in the three program goal areas of 1) academic achievement, 2) assistance with health, personal, and family problems, and 3) career exploration or work preparation.

## Academic Achievement

Mentoring activities addressing academic achievement and basic skill improvement could include such activities as:

- going on a library tour
- researching information on the Internet
- tutoring in math or reading
- discussing problem-solving techniques
- assisting mentee to research and acquire information for an assignment
- learning how to use the computer
- visiting a museum and preparing a speech or paper about the trip

## Health, Personal, and Family

Activities appropriate for goals related to health, personal, or family problems could include:

- going on a hospital tour
- visiting a middle-scale restaurant
- visiting a large city or a farm
- learning how to manage a checkbook
- attending a neighborhood festival
- participating in a local anti-drug campaign
- attending or participating in local sporting events
- jointly participating in a community service project
- assisting the mentee in solving problems

## Career Exploration

Activities within the category of career exploration could include:

- visiting the mentor's business
- attending a job fair
- discussing high school graduation requirements
- visiting colleges
- visiting the local shopping mall
- preparing a resume
- creating a business letter
- attending a staff meeting at a local business
- teaching interviewing skills
- discussing goal-setting ideas

- reflecting together on the careers associated with the community service project
- discussing the different jobs available in the mall

## General Activities

Many other general activities found to be useful in establishing a positive relationship include:



- meeting for lunch or dinner
- jogging or bicycle riding together
- starting a hobby
- communicating by telephone or e-mail
- surfing on the Internet
- sending birthday or holiday greetings
- sharing magazine or newspaper articles
- attending a parade
- attending school functions open to the public
- conducting a demonstration in a mentee's class
- attending a movie
- attending an appropriate religious activity
- introducing mentee to new people with different jobs and backgrounds
- hiking in a local park

## Survey of Other Activities

One additional reminder about activities is from a recent survey of mentors (McLearn et al., 1998) which indicates that mentoring relationships are more likely to be successful when the mentor engages in a wide range of activities. From a list of 15 different activities investigated, the leading activities used by the mentors were:

- teaching social skills
- standing up for the youth when in trouble
- providing social or cultural experiences
- exposing the youth to the mentor's own work
- making career introductions
- teaching job-related skills

## Helpful Hints About Rewards & Incentives

Rewards and incentives are part of our everyday life. Many mentors experience motivational and incentive programs as part of their daily family life or within their business world. They may also be financially capable of providing incentives or valuable rewards to the mentee as a way of additional praise for accomplishments or advancements made by the mentee. Some mentees may even encourage these actions, but it is not recommended except in special circumstances and only with minimal values attached to the incentive or reward.

Since a limited number of rewards should be used, most local program guidelines will provide suggested conditions for such events. Incentives are most effective when they relate to a specific accomplishment, have a time frame attached, are consistent with the program goal, and conform to the mentee's life style. Examples of generally acceptable rewards are:

- a snack treat at the mall
- a luncheon or dinner
- a book or magazine
- a local transportation fare
- a ticket to a museum or sporting event
- a personal present at Christmas, Hanukkah, or birthdays

## Monitoring, Evaluating, & Reporting Responsibilities

It is critical to monitor and evaluate each component of the mentor program at regular intervals in order to determine the impact and the continuance of the program. Each mentor bears some responsibility to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation processes that must occur.

Process evaluation or program monitoring provides important information to program coordinators about general ongoing procedures and practices, such as the actual mentoring activity. If program exceptions or problems are identified, then minor program adjustments can be made throughout the life of the mentor program. There are several ways to collect program information; for example,

*Mentoring is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated, it will both satisfy the soul and frustrate the mind.*

the program coordinator may make an occasional telephone inquiry to the mentor. Another common method is to require the use of an activity report. This monitoring requirement for mentors usually consists of the completion of a report for each completed mentor-mentee activity. The content for a suggested Mentoring Activity Report is offered in Figure 5.



## Mentoring Activity Report

Mentee Name: _____

Mentor Name: _____

Date: _____ Time: (Start) _____ (End) _____

Location: _____

Planned Activity: _____

Topics Discussed: _____

High Spirit Items: _____

Areas of Concern: _____

General Observations: _____

Follow-up Actions:

Mentee: _____

Mentor: _____

Recommendations or Referrals Made: _____

Progress of Mentor-Mentee Relationship:

☐ poor ☐ average ☐ good ☐ excellent

Explain briefly: _____

Suggestions for Action/Comments to Guide Future Meetings: _____

Date, Place, and Plan for Next Meeting: _____

*Figure 5. Sample mentoring activity report.*

*Change will happen*
*–observe it*
*–document it*
*–analyze it*
*–report about it*

Program assessment or outcome evaluation provides the coordinator with additional information to determine if the program is having an impact and reaching its goals. Are the mentoring activities demonstrating a positive change in the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies of the mentee? Mentors are usually requested to complete an annual report about their mentoring experiences including their perceptions about the accomplishments and progress of their mentees. This information will be useful for later promotional and final reports to program sponsors and other decision makers about the continuance of the program.



Program evaluation is probably the most critical aspect of the evaluation process. These evaluation results usually guide the continuation of the funding for the mentor program. Mentors should be aware of the changes that are occurring with their mentees, thus being in a position to report certain indicators to the program coordinator. In particular, an excellent program evaluation would seek evidence about the mentees in many different categories, such as:

| Categories of Expected Change | Indicators of Change |
|---|---|
| A ATTITUDES | More interest in school, involvement in after-school activities, feels better about home life, etc. |
| B BEHAVIORS | Less discipline referrals, less absenteeism, etc. |
| C COMPETENCIES | Improved test scores, new job-related skills, etc. |
| D DEVELOPMENTAL | Improvement in areas of mental and physical health, economics, drug use, etc. |
| E EVERYTHING ELSE | Family participation, civic responsibility, parent involvement, recidivism rates, social interactions, team participation, etc. |

# Reminders and Program Ideas for Mentors

## Mentees' Reasons for Joining the Mentor Program

Some mentor programs are created by the family court system and the mentees have little choice about their attendance. School administrators and parents many times will require the mentee to participate. However, other mentees will have a multitude of reasons for joining the program, and it is helpful for the mentor to know these reasons and keep them in mind as they proceed with the broader stated goals and objectives of the structured program. Some of the reasons given by mentees include:

- passing a course in school
- passing to the next grade level
- graduating from high school
- learning how to apply for a job
- getting a job
- learning new ideas or skills
- making new friends
- getting away from home or neighborhood
- learning how to care for a new baby
- seeking a caring adult
- helping them to escape from their current situation

## Mentors' Objectives to Accomplish With Mentees

Most mentors volunteer to serve in order to assist the local programs meet their stated objectives. In addition, many mentors have a variety of skills and experiences that they wish to share with the mentees within the context of the mentoring activities. In a general sense, however, most mentors wish to accomplish several objectives with their mentees. Among those objectives that mentors have for their mentees are to help them:

- improve their self-esteem
- learn self-reliance
- establish personal goals
- initiate positive actions
- learn to problem solve
- learn to be part of a team
- practice civic responsibilities
- learn to identify and build on personal strengths

## Mentors' Personal Information to Share With Mentee

Building a trusting relationship between a mentor and a mentee will involve sharing personal information about each other as the relationship grows. Just how much personal information should the mentor share is a major issue that has no specific answer, but several general guidelines have been found to be helpful. Intimate personal, family, or financial information is considered to be private and confidential information and should not be shared. It is very common, however, to share limited personal information and general information about your family, your community or neighborhood, and your job.

Information about the mentor's past experiences is normally useful to help start and build a relationship. In addition, insights about how the mentor thinks and his or her views about the future are excellent ways to invite mentees to think and begin to vision what their own future might offer. Specific information will vary in different relationships but as a guide the following categories are usually acceptable items to share with mentees. They are:

- job description and skills required
- job related responsibilities
- previous jobs and experiences
- likes and dislikes about the job
- career goals
- community responsibilities
- neighborhood involvement
- family names and interests
- family histories
- family vacations
- personal habits
- personal likes and dislikes
- personal hobbies and leisure time activities
- personal accomplishments in education, business, sports, arts, etc

*If I mentor one day,*
*I can see the results*
*If I mentor two days,*
*my mentee can see it*
*If I mentor three days,*
*the public can see*
*the results*

## Pitfalls and Obstacles to Consider

Regardless of the best intentions or most engaged efforts by everyone, building a new relationship is difficult and may not always work. Therefore, it is prudent to recognize situations in a timely manner and make the necessary program adjustments. Many program coordinators will establish a rematch for the mentee and mentor or make other program assignments assuring that both parties remain positive about the overall program. *The Mentor Bulletin* (Dealing With Obstacles, 1991) identified several of these obstacles to success that were adapted from other studies and reports. They include:

- a bad match
- communications problems
- serious behavior or life-threatening situations
- unrealistic expectations by either person
- problems in taking the initiative
- problems in selecting the right meeting place
- problems in ending the relationship



## Best and Least Effective Practices

A major research synthesis about mentor programs in the United States completed by Public/Private Ventures (Sipe, 1996) reported about the effective practices of mentors. Effective mentors were more likely to engage in these practices:

- involve youth in deciding how to spend time together
- commit to being consistent and dependable
- maintain a steady presence in the youth's life
- take responsibility to keep the relationship alive
- attend to the youth's need for "fun"

- recognize the relationship may be one-sided at the start
- respect the youth's viewpoint
- seek and utilize the help and advice of program staff

Less effective mentors were likely to follow several distinct practices. These mentors tended to:

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- attempt to transform the youth by setting goals and tasks too early
- be authoritative in their interactions
- emphasize behavior changes more than development of mutual trust
- have difficulty meeting on regular basis
- demand mentee to play role in initiating contact
- attempt to instill a set of values that were different from those in the home
- ignore the advice of program staff about responses to difficult issues

# Section 4

## Reinforcement and Ongoing Training

### Reasons for Ongoing Training

"One of the strongest conclusions we have reached from our research is the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop relationships with youth" (Sipe, 1996, p. 9). Most volunteers and mentees cannot just be matched and then left to their own ingenuity to go forward and develop a healthy and trusting relationship. A solid ongoing training program must be part of the infrastructure to provide support and encouragement to the mentors.

Providing ongoing training has four major purposes. A recommended two-hour monthly meeting conducted by the program coordinator permits an excellent opportunity to 1) inform mentors about new program policies or procedures, 2) initiate a peer support base for the mentors, 3) provide assistance or feedback to mentors about their experiences with the mentees, and 4) provide new knowledge, skills, or enhanced experiences for the mentor.

Attendance at these ongoing training programs should be encouraged but not mandatory. The training serves as an excellent opportunity to recognize exemplary mentee achievements and mentor experiences on a regular basis. Also, mentors will more likely remain in the program as a result of these continuous, supportive training methods.

Another source for supplemental training materials is the many mentor related web sites currently available on the Internet. A review of these web sites may be an excellent option for ongoing training by many mentors not able to attend regular meetings. A listing of several of the known mentoring web addresses is found in the Reference section.

An example program outline of an ongoing training session for mentors has been adapted from the *Mentoring Handbook* and is shown in Figure 6.

# Program Outline of Ongoing Training

## 1. Program Policies or Procedures

A. Announce and discuss new school or program policies and procedures
B. Discuss procedures that hinder the relationship or the completion of activities
C. Review details of planned group activities

## 2. Mentor Sharing Opportunities

A. Review the information included on the mentor reporting forms
B. Share relationship experiences that did or did not work successfully
C. Discuss special or unique circumstances with the mentees

## 3. Program Support and Feedback

A. Announce and review new resources availability to the mentor or mentee
B. General program feedback presented by the program coordinator
C. Share information received from mentees, parents, or community leaders
D. Review and discuss misinterpretations of the mentors or troubled relationships
E. Request mentor feedback for program improvements

## 4. New Knowledge or Skills to Consider

A. Introduce new information or techniques to the mentors
B. Provide opportunities to build personal skills
C. Share reading materials or other information to be taken home and reviewed later
D. Utilize invited guests to lead this component of the session
E. Offer a new "tip of the day" about mentoring practices

## 5. Reflections and Open Discussions

A. General observations from the mentors
B. Questions and answers

Figure 6
Sample program outline of ongoing training session for mentors.
(Adapted from the *Mentoring Handbook*, Kalamazoo Area Academic Achievement Program, Kalamazoo, Michigan.)

*Mentoring–*
*it's all about caring*

# Unique Topics for Ongoing Training

## How to Handle Special Relationships

Mentor programs are designed to serve a variety of youth with different personal issues such as family abuse, behavior problems, school dropouts, or teen pregnancy. Adjudicated youth or children placed in mentor programs by the family courts pose even more challenges for mentors. Special programs or situations such as those illustrated do require specialized information and training beyond the basic information presented in this guide. Certified counselors and other professionals should offer this specialized training. This type of training falls into the categories described later as either "reinforcement training" or "specialized training."



## Mentor Actions With Troubled Mentees

A mentor's behavior and actions must rise to high levels of excellence that demonstrate leadership qualities. Mentors should always behave in a way that promotes mutual respect and dignity. When difficult situations arise, two guiding principles for mentor actions are suggested:

### Mentors must take actions in order to:

- Make the mentee feel important and appreciated
- Turn the frustration of the mentee into self-satisfaction
- Win over the angry mentee
- Reduce the stress of the mentee
- Stay calm and keep the mentee from losing control

### Mentors must control their own behaviors by:

- Remaining calm in the most demanding situation
- Becoming a master in the art of listening
- Using convincing expressions and actions to earn trust
- Acting within the guidelines of the program
- Saying "no" and disagreeing or being firm without antagonism

## Techniques for Dissolving Relationships

The formal ending of a mentoring relationship will likely occur in different ways. If the relationship is terminated because of programmatic problems, there is usually a suggested process to follow which should present no lasting negative feelings. Successful relationships may continue for a lifetime, however, there should be program milestones that recommend and permit formal relationships to terminate. These milestones are usually established around a school year or calendar year and are represented with group activities planned by the program coordinator. Some of these group activities are picnics, recognition dinners, or visits to special events or recreational places.

Additional techniques or actions used by mentors to recognize the formal program ending of the relationship include:

- an inexpensive personal gift
- a photo album of the activities during the relationship
- a special luncheon or dinner
- attendance at a unique local event
- a family gathering event
- an article or notice in a local newsletter or paper about the ending of the program
- a personal creation of a painting, poem, song, etc.

*Real mentors don't eat –*
*They feast on the joys*
*of their mentees*

# Tips About Training Techniques

Mentors are typically adults with a wide range of personal and job experiences. Therefore, it is important to keep several factors in mind. First, vary the types of instructional techniques to include a mixture of lectures, visitations, small group assignments or discussions, media presentations, or the use of computer technologies. Utilization of the mentors to lead discussion groups should be encouraged. Other external consultants should be used to provide key presentations about unique situations or special subject areas.

Case study information about documented mentor-mentee relationships are helpful to review. Special exhibits by commercial venders or community service providers may also serve to provide new or enhanced information for the mentors. Group visitations by only the mentors to unique institutions such as prisons or family court proceedings may serve useful in some training programs.

# Section 5 Specialized Training

## When Is Special Training or Guidance Required?

Mentors are not expected to know how to handle each and every situation that occurs within the vast range of mentoring activities. When unusual events are observed or life-threatening situations appear to be imminent, the mentor is just not skilled or qualified to interact with the situation. Thus, the mentor must notify the program coordinator. Special guidance might be provided to the mentor or specialized training might be offered to all the mentors in the program.

Several of the situations commonly identified by program coordinators that require direct guidance or specialized training for the mentor include behaviors by the mentee such as:

- evidence of family abuse
- indicators of alcohol and drug abuse
- evidence of pregnancy
- evidence of theft
- threats of suicide
- involvement in gangs
- evidence of school violence

## Role-Play Exercises

Each mentor-mentee relationship will differ in the activities they participate in, the issues they face, and how they are resolved. Some mentors will be very comfortable with the uncertainty of issues that could arise and with the manner in which they are addressed. Other mentors will have extreme anxiety about certain critical issues or topics and with the problem-solving techniques used to discuss and resolve the situation. Role-plays or simulations of projected situations with mentees will offer practical approaches to the mentors.



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*I have but one lamp*
*by which my feet are*
*guided, and that is*
*the lamp of experience.*
*I know no way of*
*judging of the future*
*but by the past.*

*–Patrick Henry*

Role-plays are an effective training technique to present unique situations found in the daily lives of the mentees. Effective role-plays will provide opportunities to fully discuss numerous responses to the situations as well as how each response strategy might impact the situation or the mentee. These simulated experiences are always initiated in a safe environment and can be completed within a limited amount of time. Role-plays should be part of each mentor training program regardless of their level of expertise.

Faddis, Ruzicka, Berard, and Huppertz (1988a) present several hypothetical incidents that portray some nitty-gritty issues and provide potential role-play scenarios. Some of these are listed below. Mentors should select one or more, review how they would react, and then share these responses with other peer mentors.

- Both times that your student has come to see you, you have noticed a strange odor wafting through your office. This smell and the discolored area under her armpits suggest poor personal hygiene. How do you deal with this? Do you approach the problem directly? If so, how can you justify making such personal comments to someone you hardly know?
- Your student uses poor grammar. Seldom have you heard so many double negatives and mismatched subjects and verbs in such a short amount of time. Is it sufficient for you to exemplify or model proper speech, or should you talk about it with him? What do you say?
- Your student talks in Black dialect. You point out that it is fine to do that in other settings, but it is not appropriate in the business world. She becomes defensive and says that she has no intention of changing and, furthermore, if you were true to yourself, you wouldn't need to conform to other people's expectations. What do you do?

- Your mentorship has had a tremendous influence on your student. Her enthusiasm is infectious and has brightened your day the four times you have seen her. She's intelligent and has good, but not great, grades and tremendous potential. On her fifth visit she bursts into tears. Her family just isn't making it financially, and, as she is the oldest child, she has to quit school now and get a job. What do you say? What do you do?



- Your student has crossed the boundary from congeniality to overfamiliarity. He calls you by your first name, asks you personal questions, and treats you like a buddy. Is this a good idea? How do you handle it if you think it needs handling?

- Your student is a dedicated, born-again, fundamentalist Christian and wants the world to know it. Every time you have seen her she has worn a "Love Jesus" button, and she peppers her speech with "The Bible says," "If you have faith," and "It's a blessing." Do you see this as a problem? How do you talk about it with her?

- In the first two meetings with your student, a comfortable rapport has developed. She comes to your third session looking distraught. She just found out that she is seven weeks pregnant. Her boyfriend dropped her when she told him, and she is convinced that her overbearing father would throw her out of the house if he knew. There is no clergy in whom she has confidence, and she's afraid to tell the school counselor. You're the only adult she trusts. She needs your help. How will you give it to her?

- Your student smokes, and her clothes and breath smell like cigarettes. She hasn't lit up in your presence, but she sometimes exhales smoke as she walks into your office and digs into her purse as soon as she leaves. Is this something you should talk to her about? What do you say?

- Your student is responsible and earns good grades. He works hard at a part-time job and has saved some money toward college. He really needs a car in order to fulfill all his commitments but needs an adult with a steady job to cosign a small loan for the purchase. Also, by process of elimination of family and acquaintances, you're it. What do you do or say when he tells you this? Do you sign? If not, how do you tell him no?

- Your student has a boyfriend and wants to bring him to your sessions. You tell her you'd like to meet him, but the sessions are just for the two of you. She agrees, but her boyfriend accompanies her to every session, waits in the outer office, and gives her a big kiss as she walks into and out of your office. Are you comfortable with this? What do you say or do about it?

*When was the*
*Last time you did*
*something for the*
*First time?*
*Be a mentor*

# Guidelines for Difficult Situations

Regardless of the real-life situations that mentors will encounter, there are a few guidelines that apply in almost all cases (Faddis, et al., 1988b). Several suggestions are offered below to guide mentors as they interact with the mentees in difficult situations.

- Face the problem. Ignoring it won't make it go away. Inappropriate attitudes and behaviors in the work context will, if they continue, only increase your anxiety level and probably those of your co-workers, too. If a problem is really a problem, it's best to deal with it early, before it gets bigger.
- Think beforehand about what you want to accomplish in dealing with a sensitive issue or situation. For example, do you want only to know whether or not the student is aware of a behavior and its effect, or do you want to impart your viewpoint? Do you want to change the student's behavior? Knowing your purpose helps keep things focused.
- Bring things up early in a visit; don't wait till the end of the visit or for an "opportune time" to present itself. There is probably never a good time to bring up a hard topic, and so it's best to get to it right away. You'll never regret how much better you feel after you've discussed and resolved a difficult situation.
- Separate the behavior from the person. Speak objectively about the behavior and positively about the person. For example, "I like your energy, but when you do _____, it puts me in an awkward position."



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- Don't overdo humor, teasing, or jokes. A teenager will not always grasp issues presented in a half-joking but serious manner. Also, adolescent egos can be unpredictable; what might seem funny one day may not be received in the same vein the next day. The best guideline is to stay serious but supportive, don't tease or joke, and save humor for lighter times.



- Discuss sensitive issues in a private place, if possible. Think twice about using your office, if you have a private one, because it may feel too formal and stiff if you and your student are not accustomed to meeting and talking there. Private space in the cafeteria, employee lounge, or conference room might be better. You may even want to take a walk and talk out-of-doors.

- Consider relating something personal about yourself during the discussion with your student. For example, tell her about a similar incident in your youth and how you handled it. This kind of self-disclosure and empathy makes you seem real and special to the student, not just another adult giving a lecture.

- Reinforce at a later time something positive about your student, and emphasize that the issue was about behavior, not personality.

# Mentoring Tips for Teenage Girls

The teen years are a special challenge for girls–both socially and in school. It is also a very difficult challenge for mentors working with girls during these turbulent years. This topic serves as an excellent example for a specialized ongoing training session with an external consultant leading a discussion on understanding this risky period for girls. The participants could gain insights and tips for mentoring with these girls.

For example, some research indicates there are specific dangers faced by all teenage girls in five key areas: physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual development, and financial accountability (Echevarria, 1998). These areas are important to understand so that, throughout the mentoring experience, they can be recognized by the mentor and dealt with in a satisfactory manner.

Furthermore, when a teenage girl is confronted with situations from any of the key troublesome areas, she is likely to try to talk to a mentor before she talks to a parent. Mentors should be aware of these crises and have an

understanding of how to respond to any questions or situations that may arise in the mentoring relationship. Echevarria (1998) lists thirteen crises that girls are more likely to tell a mentor:

1. I had sex last night.
2. I had unprotected sex.
3. I'm pregnant.
4. I've been smoking for awhile.
5. I got drunk last night.
6. I want to kill myself.
7. I throw up after each meal.
8. My mom doesn't care about me.
9. I hate myself.
10. I want the pill.
11. He hit me.
12. An older male friend keeps coming on to me.
13. This guy made me do something I didn't want to do.



How the mentor recognizes and responds to any of these situations is critical. For example, the general guidance to mentors is to be a good listener, and do not condemn or find fault with the person. Discuss the situation with the mentee; then, allow the mentee to make the decision to take the appropriate action. If the situation appears harmful to the person or the situation cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the people involved, then the mentor should seek external professional assistance.

# Liabilities and Problem Issues of Mentoring

Legal actions against volunteers or nonprofit organizations are unusual but it is prudent to be careful in all mentoring actions with the mentees or in any group program activity. Most institutions will have insurance coverage for the unexpected accidents or program mishaps. Volunteers working on an approved school or organizational assignment are nearly always covered within these institutional insurance programs. Most local mentor programs will provide guidance to the mentors on specific liability issues they feel are pertinent to the program.

It is nearly impossible to identify all possible areas of danger. Caution is always the best practice when planning and implementing all mentoring activities. However, it is best to follow several general guidelines when planning and conducting mentoring activities:

- require parental approvals for off-campus trips
- assure that all extra drivers are screened and are approved
- have adequate personal liability and automobile insurance coverage
- select entertainment or play venues carefully
- avoid having firearms or weapons present while with mentees
- avoid leaving your mentee alone or with strangers
- avoid the use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs when with the mentee

# Section 6

## Final Thoughts

## Promotional Activities for Program Advancements

A vital element of each mentor program is the promotional component. Promotional activities are critical for the program to continue and advance its presence within the local community hosting the program. Successful mentor-mentee relationships will help tell the story to specific program sponsors and to the community at large. Mentors are usually in a position to share their experiences with a wide variety of audiences. Opportunities should be infused in the training program to provide mentors with ideas about how to market the program and how to applaud the accomplishments of the mentees.



## Reflections and Observations

It is desirable to have each mentor reflect on newly presented ideas at each training session. Therefore, as part of each training program, usually near the end of each session, the training coordinator should make it a permanent feature to provide each mentor with the opportunity to react to the current lesson and to vision how they might use the new information. This action engages the mentor and provides additional perspectives to others in the group.

# Recommendations and Conclusions

Mentoring is the building of a trusting relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Research and anecdotal records abound with successful stories of wonderful relationships. However, it is rare when these powerful stories occur without the mentor being first engaged in a structured training program and also provided with ongoing support. As discussed earlier, Sipe's research (1996) stated that "one of the strongest conclusions reached in reviewing effective mentor programs was the importance of the training and support to mentors." No more needs to be said!

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# Mentoring Web Site Directory & Site Links

| Organization | Website Address |
|---|---|
| America's Promise | www.americaspromise.org |
| Arthur Ashe's National Junior Tennis League | www.geocities.com/~ashekids |
| Association of Youth Councils | www.ayc.org |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of America | www.bbbsa.org |
| Big Brother Association of Greater Boston | www.townonline.com/boston/commres/bigbrother/index2.htm |
| California Mentor Initiative | www.adp.cahwnet.gov |
| Carnegie Mellon University Center for University Outreach | http://outreach.mac.cc.cmu.edu |
| Community for Youth | www.thefoundry.org |
| Community Links | www.communitypolicing.org |
| Connecticut Mentoring Partnership | www.ctdhe.commnet.edu/dheweb/mentoring.htm |
| Corporation for National Service (Americorps) | www.cns.gov |
| Creative Mentoring | www.creativementoring.org/ |
| Dare Mighty Things (DMT) | www.daremightythings.com/services.htm |
| Flint Public Library WebStation (This site links to teen oriented agencies.) | www.flint.lib.mi.us/weblinks |
| Four Directions: Electronic Mentoring Project | www.tapr.org/4d |
| Fresh Youth Initiatives | www.freshyouth.org/mentor.html |
| Grandpa-Grandma Corps | www.primenet.com/~rhickman/ |
| Hestia's Children, Inc. | www.unitynorthchurch.org/hestias/ |
| Hewlett Packard Telementor Program | www.telementor.org/hp/ |
| IMA-Indiana Mentor | www.indiana.edu/~rugsdev/power.html |
| It Takes a Village to Raise One Child | www.impacting.org |
| Kingston Police Youth Mentoring Programs | www.police.kingston.on.ca/pages/comm_rel/yth_mtr.html |
| LearnWell eMentors | www.learnwell.org/~edu/ementors.shtml |

| Organization | Website Address |
|---|---|
| Mentor Center | http://mentorcenter.bbn.com/ |
| Mentoring Examples | http://mbhs.bergtraum.k12.ny.us/mentor/exam.html |
| Mentoring Partnership Project STAR | www.projectstar.org |
| Mentoring Works | www.mentoringworks.org/index.html |
| Miramichi Youth Village | www.youthvillage.nb.ca/ |
| National Guard Youth Challenge Program | www.mentoring.org/programs/nationalguardy_r_s.html |
| Networking for Youth | www.cpn.org/pew_partnership/civic_partners_or.html |
| New York Volunteer for Youth Campaign | www.volunteerforyouth.org |
| Perach a Tutorial Project | www.weizmann.ac.il/perach |
| Points of Light Foundation | www.pointsoflight.org |
| RAPS: Science Mentoring | www.urmc.rochester.edu/smd/mbi/RAPS.html |
| Selective Learning Network | www.slnedu.com/site |
| South Huron Big Brothers/Big Sisters | www.odyssey.on.ca/~shbbbs/ |
| Telementoring Web | http://mbhs.bergtraum.k12.ny.us/mentor/index.html |
| The Big Brother/Big Sisters of the National Captital Area | www.bbbsnca.org |
| The Mentoring Group | www.mentoringgroup.com |
| The National Mentoring Partnership | www.mentoring.org |
| Urban League Big Brother/Big Sisters | www.flint.lib.mi.us/urbleague-bigbrobigsis/ |
| Women Into Science and Technology | www.turbo.kean.edu/~wistproj/ |
| Youth Life Skills | www.youthlifeskills.com |
| Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc. | www.youthoppt.com/ |

The above sites are intended for use as references and are not intended as endorsements by the Center. The web addresses are accurate and the sites are open upon publication of this guide.

# About the Author

*Jay Smink*

Dr. Jay Smink has been a teacher, coach, Boy Scout leader, administrator, teacher educator, researcher, evaluator, mentor trainer, and a mentor. More important than all others, he is a father with the full range of experiences and emotions that come with that awesome responsibility. Since 1988, he has been the Executive Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, where he also is a professor of education in the College of Health, Education, and Human Development.

Dr. Smink learned a lot from teaching at the secondary level and coaching football, basketball, and golf that applies to working with youth. He has also learned much from more than twenty years of providing training and working closely with mentors in many local school and community-based mentor programs across the nation. Throughout all of these encounters, it was extremely clear that we all benefit from new ideas that are based on practical experiences and are easy to understand. Thus, the information, discussions, and activities described in this book may seem simple, but they are based on his personal mentoring activities, leadership experiences, and training experiences with teachers and mentors.

Dr. Smink prepared this guidebook like he was creating a building with the pieces of an erector set—he used many ideas and suggestions from the varied experiences of mentors and program leaders from across the country. He supported the book on mentoring practices with research from other disciplines that relate directly to building the best skills for mentors that would lead to successful experiences for their mentees. Therefore, this book is for both local mentor program coordinators and for volunteers wishing to be the very best mentors they can be.

Dr. Smink feels that mentoring will never go out of vogue because it is a powerful technique for helping others. Similarly, he believes the content of this guidebook will never go out of style because it can always be used in any relationship whether it is in the school, workplace, social settings, or in the home. Just as others have enjoyed these ideas and have benefited from this content as it was assembled over years of training, Dr. Smink hopes you enjoy the guidebook and that it helps to improve the skills of each mentor in your program.

*Mentoring–*
*you never outgrow it*

# About the National Dropout Prevention Center

The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) is a partnership of concerned leaders–representing business, educational and policy interests, and Clemson University–created to significantly reduce America's dropout rate. NDPC is committed to meeting the needs of youth in at-risk situations by reshaping school and community environments to ensure that all youth will receive the quality education and services to which they are entitled.

Both influenced by and seeking to influence research, practice, policy, and perceptions, NDPC provides technical assistance to develop, demonstrate, and evaluate dropout prevention efforts; conducts action research; and collects, analyzes, and disseminates information about efforts to improve the schooling process.

# About the National Dropout Prevention Network

The National Dropout Prevention Network is a membership organization of more than 3,000 teachers, counselors, school administrators, state department of education staff, and business and community leaders who are concerned with dropout issues. The Network is guided by an Executive Board of national leaders representing educators, policymakers, community, business and labor groups, parents, and other concerned persons. Membership benefits in the Network include free subscriptions to the quarterly *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* and The *Journal of At-Risk Issues*; complimentary research publications each year; participation in regional institutes and national conferences; and access to special databases and Internet chat lines. Dr. Smink serves as the Executive Director of the National Dropout Prevention Network.

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Thanks also to Marilyn Madden for conducting a current review of web sites addressing the issue of mentoring.

Thanks to the many volunteers who so willingly participate as mentors working with the country's most valuable asset--its youth.

*Volunteers are not paid,*

*Not because they are worthless,*

*But because they are priceless.*

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